



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
23 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

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To all Maine Families:

We are happy to announce that school meals will continue to be free for all students during the 2021-22 school year! Any Maine family, regardless of income eligibility, will be able to participate in the nutritious and tasty meals your district provides at your child's school. This past school year has certainly had its challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and remote and hybrid learning models. We are thrilled that despite these challenges, all Maine children have been able to access free healthy school meals on a daily basis. We would like to extend our gratitude to Maine parents and caregivers who have participated in their districts' meal programs, despite the many changes to child nutrition programs.

We are calling on you to take action this school year by taking the time to complete the Meal Benefit Application. Any family can benefit from participating in school nutrition programs, and this application is important for a number of reasons. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, when school meals became complementary, there has been a significant drop in Meal Benefit Application returns.

You may be wondering: why is completing the Meal Benefit Application necessary if meals are free anyway? Even though any family can participate in school meal programs at no cost, the family income data provided by completing the application informs key funding for academic resources. This application is one way you as a parent or caregiver can invest in your student's education. Completing a Meal Benefit Application not only determines if your student(s) qualifies for free/reduced school meals—you can also be connected to other important benefits. These benefits can include additional nutrition assistance through the Pandemic EBT program, as well as other family services.

The Meal Benefit Application for the 2021-22 school year can be completed at any point starting July 1, 2021 or after. Your district's Food Service Director will provide application information then. More information, including application assistance and other materials, are forthcoming.

On behalf of the Department of Education Child Nutrition team: we wish you a happy and healthy Maine Summer!

For questions or comments, please contact Caroline Bennett: Ending Hunger in Maine AmeriCorps VISTA ([caroline.bennett@maine.gov](mailto:caroline.bennett@maine.gov)).

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